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SUBJECT: CHAD: FORMER PM ALINGUE PREDICTS "WAR" IF
ELECTIONS NOT DELAYED

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Former Prime Minister of Chad Jean-Bawoyeu Alingue called on us April 12 to discuss events in Chad and report on his activities in Paris. Alingue said he had met last week with Presidential AF Advisor Michel de Bonnecorse and MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert in Paris, but claimed he had not been able to meet with anyone at the French Embassy in N'djamena in over three years. He said he told Bonnecorse that failure to delay the May 3 elections in Chad could lead to "civil war." Contrary to GOF views, Alingue said that a credible opposition existed in Chad and that Deby's hold on the army was slipping. Alingue offered that opposition political figures could be effective in brokering attempts at reconciliation between the GOC and rebel elements, should Deby first announce the postponement of elections. Alingue regretted that French officials continued to believe that there was no alternative to Deby. However, he thought that the magnitude of the ongoing rebel attacks into Central Chad could help change French thinking. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Jean-Bawoyeu Alingue, who was Prime Minister of Chad from 1991-92, called on us April 12 at the suggestion of Roland Marchal, an Africa specialist at the French think-tank Center for Study and Research (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches). Alingue said he had served as Ambassador to France, the U.S., and the UN during the 1970s. He is president of the UDR (Union pour la Democratie et la Republique) political party in Chad. Alingue said that it was imperative for Deby to postpone or delay the elections now scheduled for May 3. Alingue advised a delay of from six to nine months delay. He predicted that if this did not happen, "civil war" could ensue, i.e., that the opposition, many of whom had already announced a boycott of the elections, could respond with violence. He noted Deby's repeated refusal to engage in dialogue with the opposition. Alingue said that he had been a candidate for president in 1996 and 2001, but had chosen not to run again because of the failure of Deby to agree to dialogue and to organize elections in a reasonable manner.

¶3. (C) Alingue said he had warned the French that failure to postpone the May 3 elections could lead to civil war. He said he delivered this message most recently last week, in a meeting with Presidential Africa Advisor Michel de Bonnecorse. He also mentioned MFA AF A/S-equivalent Bruno Joubert as an interlocutor. He disputed the repeated French claim that there is no alternative to Deby in part because of

the weakness and lack of unity of the political opposition in Chad. Alingue said that there were some 20 political parties of significance, with "5 or 6" important ones. Besides serving as a possible alternative to Deby, Chad's opposition could serve a useful role in mediating between the GOC and the rebels, Alingue stated, particularly if elections were postponed. The French had failed to recognize the strides made by civil society in Chad since the early 1990s. The French presidency also ignored the existence of a burgeoning political class in Chad and continued to over-personalize, via Deby, its political relationship with Chad.

¶4. (C) Alingue noted ironically that although he had access to Bonnecore and Joubert in Paris, the French Embassy in N'djamena had refused, over the past three years, to meet with him at any level, from Ambassador on down. On the other hand, Alingue said he had never had trouble obtaining meetings with the U.S. Embassy in N'djamena, and he indicated that he welcomed this access to U.S. officials.

¶5. (C) Alingue discounted the possibility that Deby, after winning the May 3 elections, would seek national unity by naming an opposition figure as prime minister or creating a national unity government. In any event, Deby would never implement serious reforms, Alingue insisted. At several points during the meeting, Alingue expressed skepticism that Deby would ever seek national reconciliation. However, asked what he envisioned as a solution to Chad's many problems, Alingue did not provide a specific answer, stating in broad and general terms his confidence that the Chadian people, if allowed to participate in a true democratic process, would make the best choices for themselves.

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¶6. (C) On the sharp increase in fighting on April 11-12, Alingue said that Deby had experienced similar crises before in contending with rebel forces advancing on N'djamena from the east and north. "And he knows what this is all about, because he did the same thing they're doing, when he took power from Habre," Alingue remarked acidly.

¶7. (C) Alingue noted that Chad had never known peace during Deby's tenure at the top, and that Deby had never shown interest in national dialogue. Alingue expressed the hope that the magnitude of the recent fighting might prompt the French to reassess their view of Deby as indispensable. Alingue believed that Deby's hold on the army, already top-heavy with Deby's friends and relatives from the north, was slipping, notably following the waves of desertions from the army since October 2005. Asked about French claims that southern opposition groups lacked legs because they had no military expertise, Alingue took umbrage. He responded with pride that the Chadians who fought alongside free French forces in World War II were principally southerners. He derided the military capability of the northerners, claiming that "all they know how to do is poach each others' herds."

¶8. (SBU) BIO: Alingue said that he had come to Paris March 8 to attend the funeral of a niece. He and his wife planned to return to Chad on March 30, but Mrs. Alingue took ill with a pulmonary embolism and remains hospitalized in Paris. He did not know when they would be able to return to Chad and he was thinking of asking the French for permission for her to stay longer if her illness required further treatment here. Alingue said that he had other relatives permanently residing in France, including several of his own children.

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